

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

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R 292107Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1917

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 10190

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, VE

SUBJECT: ELECTION OVERVIEW AT TEN DAYS FROM ELECTION DAY

REFERENCE: CARACAS 9943, 9903 AND 9271

SUMMARY: THE OUTLOOK IS FOR THE FORTHCOMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD PEACEFULLY, AND FOR THEIR RESULTS TO BE RESPECTED. EITHER COPEI OR AD WILL WIN THE PRESIDENCY; THE OUTCOME OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RACES IS UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY.

1. INDIACIMNS ARE THAT THE LONGEST, MOST INTENSE, COSTLIEST AND NOISIEST NATIONAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN VENEZUELA'S HISTORY WILL CULMINATE IN PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY ELECTIONS ON DECEMBER 9. ELECTIONEERING CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON PURELY DOMESTIC ISSUES, AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND ANTI-U.S. THEMES ARE ABSENT FROM CAMPAIGN PROPAGANDA. THERE IS SOME CONCERN ON THE PART OF BOTH ACCION DEMOCRATICA AND COPEI THAT THE OTHER MIGHT NOT PEACEFULLY ACCEPT
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THE OUTCOME IF IT LOSES IN A CLOSE ELECTION, BUT THESE WORRIES

SEEM TO LACK SUBSTANCE. THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY AT ALL LEVELS APPEAR TO BE PREPARED TO RESPECT AND GUARANTEE THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION AS PROCLAIMED BY THE SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL, AND THE DANGER OF DISRUPTION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS BY SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS REMAINS MINIMAL. INTERIOR MINISTER ANDRADE LABARCA THIS WEEK WAS QUOTED AS STATING THAT NEVER BEFORE HAD VENEZUELA EXPERIENCED SUCH HARMONY AND TRANQUILLITY SHORTLY BEFORE A NATIONAL ELECTION, AND THIS APPEARS TO BE A REASONABLY ACCURATE STATEMENT.

2. MEANTIME CAMPAIGNING CONTINUES WITH ENORMOUS GUSTO, PARTICULARLY IN THE CARACAS AREA, WHERE THE CONTENDERS ARE STATING MASSIVE RALLIES OF THEIR SUPPORTERS. CARACAS IS BURIED IN PRINTED PROPAGANDA, WHILE DEMONSTRATIONS AND PARTISAN AUTOMOBILE CARAVANS ARE CREATING PANDEMONIUM IN THE CAPITAL, CAUSING MASSIVE TRAFFIC TIE-UPS AND IN FACT DISRUPTING THE NORMAL LIFE OF THE CITY. A GOOD-NATURED, CARNIVAL-LIKE ATMOSPHERE HAS PRVAILED, ALTHOUGH AS THE DIN AND TURMOIL OF THE CAMPAIGN RISE RELENTLESSLY DAY AFTER DAY AND LIQUOR CIRCULATES MORE PLENTIFULLY TEMPER ARE SHORTENING, AND REPORTS OF SCUFFLES BETWEEN COPEI AND AD PARTISANS, IN WHICH THE POLICE USUALLY CAREFULLY REFRAIN FROM INTERVENING, ARE BECOMING MORE NUMEROUS. PASSIONS ARE PARTICULARLY HIGH IN MARACAIBO, WHERE NUMEROUS AD-COPEI CLASHES, NONE VERY SERIOUS, HAVE BEEN REPORTED. AFTER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CALDERA ON NOVEMBER 27, COPEI SECRETARY GENERAL PEDRO PABLO AGUILAR, IN AN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY MODERATE STATEMENT DESIGNED TO DAMPEN PARTISAN ARDOR, PRAISED THE "CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTIES" AND URGED THEM TO BE "SERENE AND OPTIMISTIC DURING THE FINAL MOMENTS OF THE CIVIC STRUGGLE."

3. THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE IS STILL VERY MUCH IN DOUBT. EVERYONE ASSUMES THAT, BARRING SOME TOTALLY UNFORESEEN OCCURRENCE, EITHER COPEI'S LORENZO FERNANDEZ OR AD'S CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ WILL WIN, PROBABLY WITH A NARROW MARGIN, AND BOTH CANDIDATES ARE CONFIDENT OF VICTORY. HOWEVER, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME COPEYANOS ARE WORRRIED THAT AD'S FINAL MASSIVE ELECTORAL ONSLAUGHTS ARE PROVING MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THEIR OWN, AND THAT AS A CANDIDATE LORENZO IS AT A DISADVANTAGE AS COMPARED WITH CARLOS ANDRES. IT IS THUS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE CALDERA GOVERNMENT MAY ANNOUNCE SOME SPECTACULAR ACTION (CARACAS 9271) TO GIVE A LAST-MINUTE BOOST TO FERNANDEZ.

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4. WHILE THE POLLS HAVE SHOWN CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ HOLDING A SLIGHT LEAD OVER LORENZO FERNANDEZ (CARACAS 9943) AND ALTHOUGH PEREZ'S ANDEAN PROVENANCE MAY SWING VOTES TO HIM IN COPEI'S TRADITIONAL ANDEAN STRONGHOLD, LORENZO COULD PICK UP IMPORTANT LAST-MINUTE SUPPORT FROM SOME LEFTISTS PREFERRING THE "LESSER EVIL" OF LORENZO TO CARLOS ANDRES. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE VETERAN COMMUNIST LEADER EDUARDO MACHADO REPORTEDLY

ADMITTED TO AN INTERVIEWER THAT THE NEW FORCE (THE PCV-MEP ALLIANCE, WHICH HAS NOT PROVED A HAPPY ONE) IS NOT DOING AS WELL AS HOPED, AND THAT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR FERNANDEZ TO WIN THAN PEREZ.

5. AS THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST HEADS FOR A VICTORY FOR EITHER COPEI OR ACCION DEMOCRATICA, SOME OF THE SMALLER PARTIES, DISCOURAGED AT THEIR APPARENT LACK OF SUPPORT AND FEARING BURIAL UNDER A POSSIBLE AD-COPEI PRESIDENTIAL LANDSLIDE, ARE CASTING ABOUT FOR DEALS WITH OTHER SMALL PARTIES OR ONE OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES. SO FAR NONE HAS MATERIALIZED. ONE OF THE PEREZJIMENISTA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, THE FUN'S ALEJANDRO GOMEZ SILVA, SEEMS ON THE POINT OF FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE SET BY THE CCN'S SALAS CASTILLO BY WITHDRAWING FROM THE CONTEST (CARACAS 9903). THE PRESENT DISSATISFACTIONS AND UNCERTAINTY AMONG THE SMALLER PARTIES FURTHER COMPLICATE THEIR CLOUDY PROSPECTS IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RACES. IT CONTINUES TO APPEAR THAT AD AND COPEI TOGETHER WILL OBTAIN A MAJORITY IN CONGRESS; IN FACT THEIR PRESENT MAJORITY COULD WELL BE INCREASED.
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